

# Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4<sup>th</sup> tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about feeding of the five thousand

奇

Putonghua pronunciation: *qi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kei3*

Meanings: odd, strange, rare, exotic, marvel at

奇 = 奇怪 (*qi2 guai4* = odd~strange): 奇才 (*qi2 cai2* = rare/marvelous~talent/genius), 奇妙 (*qi2 miao4* = strange~wonderful/marvelous). 獵奇 (*lie4 qi2* = hunt-for~strange) means adventure-seeking or sensationalized reportage.

奇花異草 (*qi2 hua1 yi4 cao3* = strange~flowers~alien~grasses) = exotic plants and blooms. 奇異果 (*qi2 yi4 guo3* = strange~alien~fruit) is Chinese name for kiwi fruit.

Jesus performed 奇蹟 (*qi2 zhi1* = strange~feats = miracles). He had only 五餅二魚 (*wu3 bing3 er2 yu2* = two~cakes~five~fish = two loaves and five fish) but 餵飽五千人 (*wei4 bao3 wu3 qian1 ren2* = fed~full~five~thousand~people = fed them to five thousand people and made them full). Everyone 嘖嘖稱奇 (*ze2 ze2 cheng1 qi2* = “tut”~“tut”~exclaim~strange = marveled profusely).

by Diana Yue